

Saipan Tribune

CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

Volume XIV, Issue No. 055

TUESDAY FEBRUARY 24, 2004

www.saipantribune.com 50¢

INSIDE



China Visitors

Two officials from China's largest Chamber of Commerce are on Saipan this week to speak with local businessmen and government leaders about investment opportunities in the CNMI.

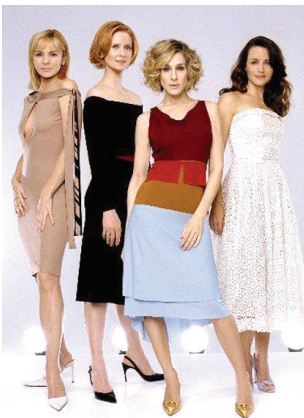
Page 5



Bus Bombing

A Palestinian suicide bomber blew himself up on a crowded Jerusalem bus Sunday, killing eight passengers one day before the world court was to begin hearings on Israel's disputed West Bank barrier.

Page 17



Return to NY

Torn between two lovers, Carrie Bradshaw returned to Mr. Big and New York, ditching Aleksandr in Paris, on Sunday's finale of "Sex and the City."

Page 21



'WRIGHT' EXPLANATION

Northern Marianas College faculty and staff attend a hastily called general meeting by the NMC Board of Regents Monday afternoon in the wake of the resignation of NMC president Kenneth Wright. The regents explained Wright's resignation to the college community. The faculty and staff showed "mixed emotions" on the board's acceptance of Wright's resignation Friday.

LIBERTY DONES

Reyes resigns as GOP head

By EDITH G. ALEJANDRO
REPORTER

CNMI Republican Party president Joe Reyes has resigned from his post effective March 15, 2004, citing personal reasons that require his immediate attention, which he said would prevent him from working on the party's plan to align with the GOP National Party.

The party's first vice-president, Regina Torres, would replace Reyes. She has been with the CNMI Republican Party for at least four years. Party by-laws provide, though, that the Board has the authority to fill up vacancies.

Reyes, who has been serving as GOP president in the last four years, refused to provide more details on the reason for his resignation, besides citing the need to give 100 percent of his time and efforts

to the NMI Retirement Fund, where he currently serves as Board of Trustees chairman.

In his resignation letter filed yesterday with the GOP administration, Reyes said personal reasons that warrant his immediate attention



Reyes

prevents him from completing his term of office, to which he was elected.

"[It is] with great sadness that I will no longer be working with everyone to achieve the hopes that we envisioned to accomplish. However, I have no doubts with our party officers' ability to carry on with the party's agenda. I ask that the common commitment be reaffirmed in helping one another for the benefit of

See REYES on Page 8

NMC Rota, Tinian students lose grant

By LIBERTY DONES
REPORTER

Authorities disclosed yesterday that Rota and Tinian Northern Marianas College students would no longer receive federal financial aid as decided by the U.S. Department of Education.

NMC office of admission, records,

and financial aid director Ray Basa said the USDE has told the college that students from the two campuses are not eligible to get the Pell Grant, based on the criteria set by the department.

"They have a different definition of a campus than we do," said Basa, when asked during yesterday's faculty and staff meeting with the NMC Board of Regents.

He said he knew about the issue when he assumed his post in 2001 and reported it to authorities accordingly.

"I found that out when I was working for certification for Title 4 (financial aid program) in 2001. They [NMC Tinian and Rota students] are not qualified based on USDE's standards because they

See NMC ROTA on Page 8

CPA to discuss passenger charge with airlines

By EDITH G. ALEJANDRO
REPORTER

The Commonwealth Ports Authority has begun processing its application with the Federal Aviation Administration for the implementation of a passenger facility charge at the Saipan International Airport.

CPA executive director Carlos H.

Salas disclosed yesterday that the ports authority would also meet with signatory airlines today to discuss the Passenger Facility Charge that the CPA hopes to implement soon.

Under the propos-



Salas

al, departing passengers from the CNMI would pay \$4.50 as passenger facility charge. Airline companies would collect the fee through sold airline tickets. The fee is similar to departure/terminal fee collected by other airports abroad.

According to Salas, the meeting today aims to thoroughly explain to the airline companies serving the Northern

See CPA on Page 8

NMC sets Gateway tuition rates

By LIBERTY DONES
REPORTER

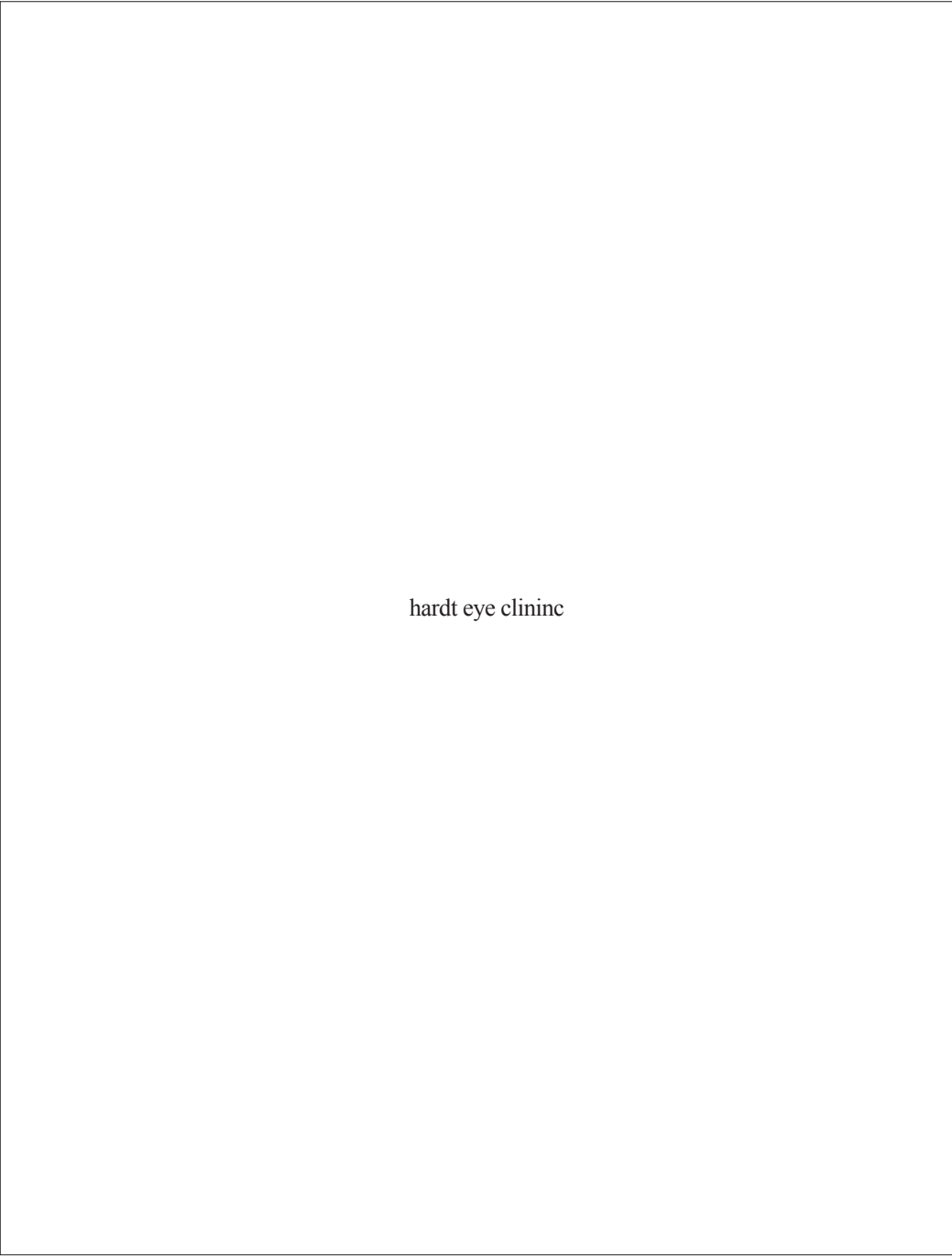
The Northern Marianas College Board of Directors has set the tuition for international students at \$250 per credit, as the college prepares to get more international students under its Pacific Gateway program by fall this year.

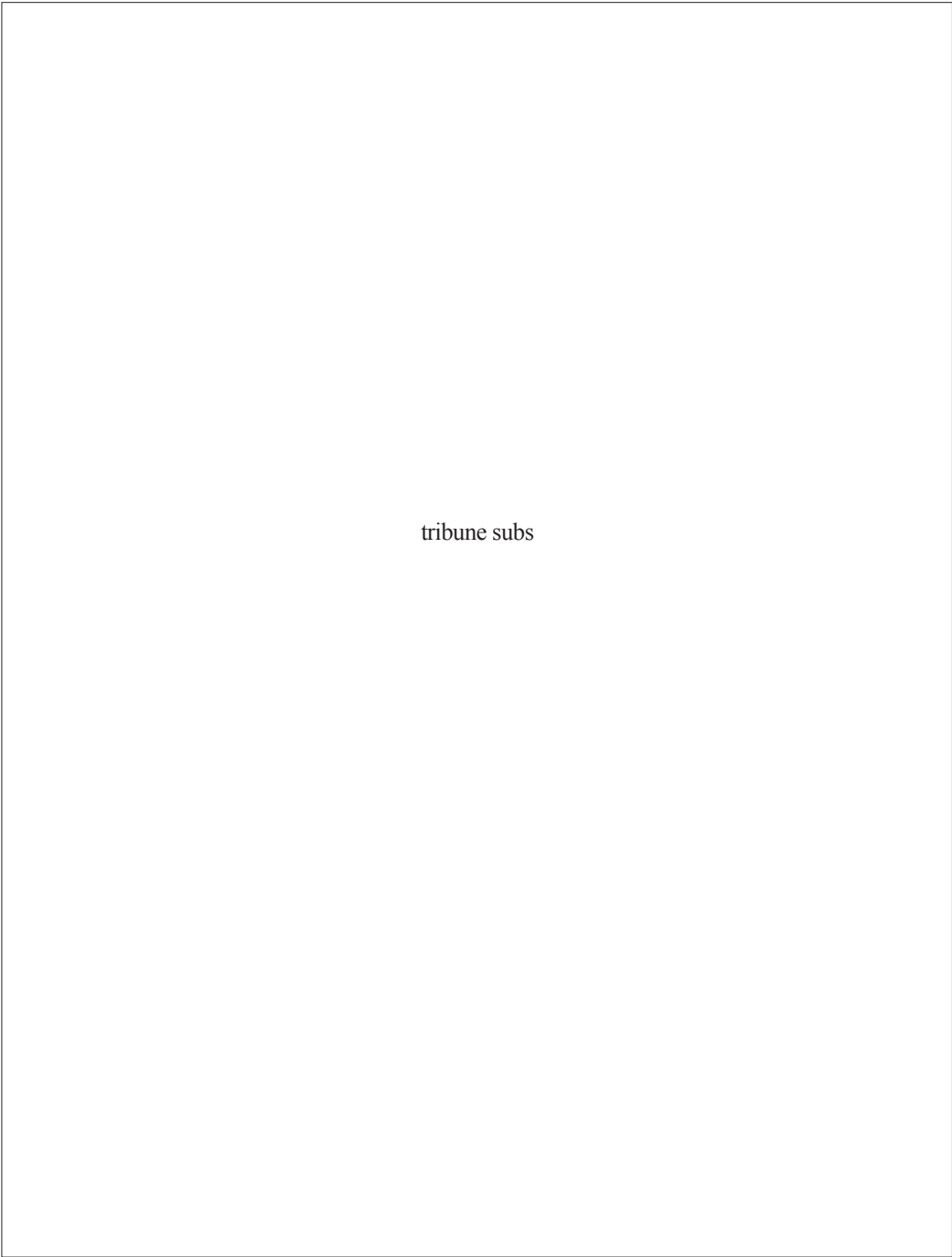
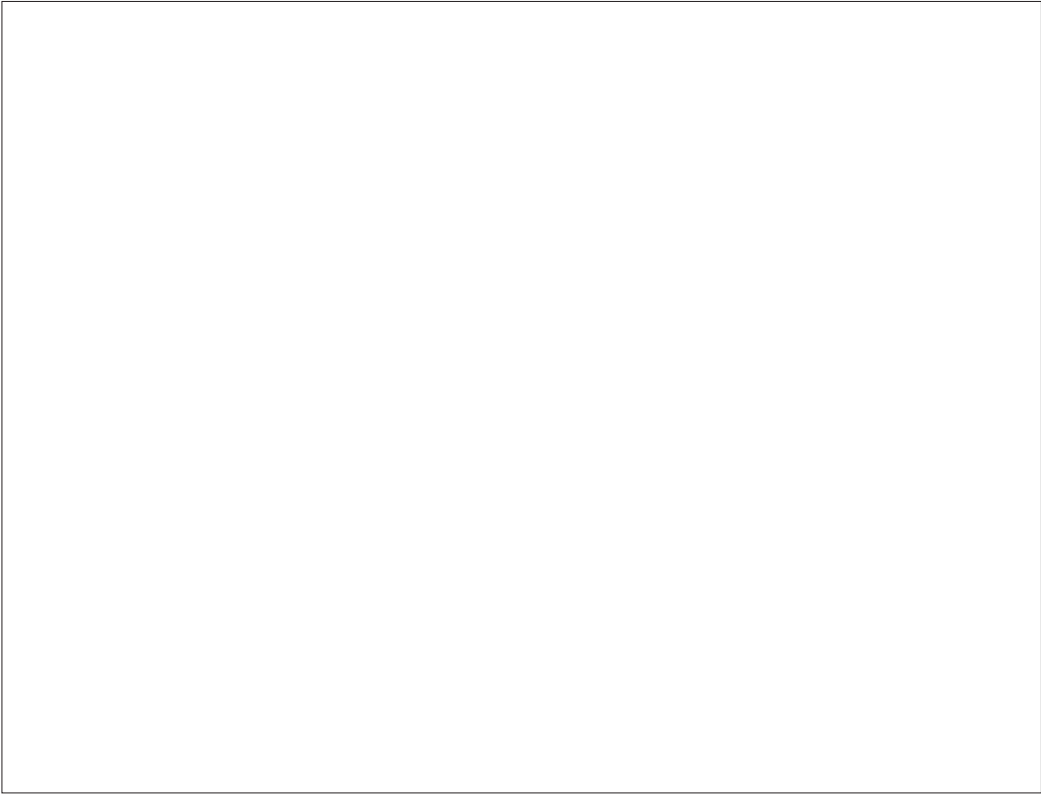
The board, however, maintained the resident students fee at \$65 and

See NMC on Page 8



Local





COMMUNITY Briefs

Mason Lodge to induct officers

There will be a public installation of elected and appointed officers of Emon Lodge No. 179, Free and Accepted Masons, for the ensuing Masonic year 2004-2005, which will be held on Feb. 25, 2004, 5:30pm at the Grand Ballroom of Saipan's World Resort Hotel.

Incumbent Grand Master of Masons of the Philippine jurisdiction Ricardo P. Galvez will be the Guest Speaker. He will be accompanied by his Deputy Grand Master Roberto Q. Pagotan.

All masons and invited honored guests are welcome.

DEQ lab branch closed on March 1

The Division of Environmental Quality Laboratory would like to inform all Public Water System clients that it will not be accepting compliance water samples on March 1, 2004.

The laboratory will be closed on this day due to a scheduled audit, which will be conducted by an Environmental Protection Agency Region IX laboratory certification officer.

All PWS clients are asked to set up their schedules for submission of compliance water samples to the DEQ Laboratory for testing anytime after March 1, 2004.

Should you have any questions regarding this matter, please contact the DEQ Laboratory Branch for assistance.

Chacha Oceanview PTSA meeting set

The ChaCha Oceanview Junior High School is informing parents and legal guardians of its students that they will have a Parent Teacher Student Association meeting on Feb. 26, at the school's cafeteria, at 6-7pm.

The agenda of this meeting will cover the 8th and 7th grade trip, promotional ceremony and other important school matters.

All parents and legal guardians are encouraged to attend this important meeting. For more information, call 664-4100/4103/4106.

Family Literacy meeting postponed

The Northern Marianas Family Literacy Consortium meeting has been postponed to Saturday, March 6, at 1pm. This will be held at the conference room of the Joeten-Kiyu Public Library.

Everyone is requested to e-mail their suggestions before March 6 to consortium secretaries Concepcion L. Van Der Veen at concepcionv@hotmail.com or to Thelma Cing at tcing@hotmail.com.

All public and private schools, Parent Teacher Associations, agencies, groups or individuals who support family literacy in the CNMI are welcome to attend the meetings, join and/or collaborate with the NMFLC.

For more information, call Jonas Barcinas at 664-5025/6, fax 664-5035 or contact the new NMFLC public information officer, Adela Kapileo, at akapileo@vzpacifica.net.

Public library closed for one week

The Joeten-Kiyu Public Library remains closed until March 1, 2004, because of new air conditioning units that are being installed.

"We will make every effort to inform the general public ahead of time; however we encourage the public to call 235-7322/3 before visiting the library or for more information on closing dates. We apologize for any inconvenience as work is being done to improve the library facility," the library administration said in a statement.

DES raffle draw postponed to May

The Dandan Elementary School has postponed its 6th Annual Cultural Day Raffle Drawing and Festivities from Feb. 14 to May 22.

"We apologize for the inconvenience this has brought upon the parents and others who have made efforts to participate in this school function. On behalf of the administration, teachers, parents, students, and the PTA officers of their school community, we thank you for your understanding and continued support in every way possible," said the school in a media statement.

Veterans of Saipan, Tinian battles sought

Veterans of the World War II battles of Saipan and Tinian will be invited to the commemoration of the 60th Anniversary of the Battle for Saipan and Tinian to be held June 12-16, 2004 on Saipan.

The Committee for the Commemoration of the 60th Anniversary of WWII is soliciting help from newspapers, churches, state and local chapters of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Veterans Associations, non-profit organizations, and family members to help identify veterans to be recognized.

Anyone who knows a veteran involved in these battles should send their name and contact information to Jessica Jordan at marianas04-anniversary@yahoo.com, or call (670) 234-7212; fax: (670) 234-7211, or mail: PMB 409 Box 10000 Saipan MP 96950.

Victim hotline volunteers sought

Wanted: Victim Hotline volunteers. The Victim Hotline is a 24/7 telephone crisis intervention hotline that provides access to information, referral, and a listening ear to victims of crimes in the Northern Marianas.

Interested individuals may contact Velma Del Rosario at 234-5100.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE DEPARTURE MARCH 2, 2004				
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bank of hawaii
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2/16

Opinion

Saipan Tribune

Volume XIII, Issue No. 352

Published daily at 2/F Century Insurance Building,
Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, CNMI
Mailing Address: PMB 34, Box 10001, Saipan, MP, 96950

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Aldwin R. Fajardo EDITOR

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AP The Associated Press

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EDITORIAL

B-52 bombers arrive on Guam

HAGATNA, Guam (PDN/PIR)—For the first time since the Vietnam War, Guam will have the continuous presence of B-52 bombers on its shores.

The first three of six B-52 Stratofortress aircraft to come to Guam out of the 5th Bomb Wing at Minot Air Force Base in North Dakota arrived on island yesterday.

With those six aircraft, some 300 support personnel are also arriving this month. The island's government and business officials have been lobbying for increased U.S. military activity on the island in part because such a buildup creates jobs for the local economy.

Though the B-52s will continue to be stationed out of North Dakota — one of two bases to station B-52s — there will be a continuous rotation of B-52s on Guam's Andersen Air Force Base, said Air Force spokeswoman Maj. Kris Meyle.

This will make Andersen the only Air Force Base in the Pacific command to continually host B-52s currently, she said.

Meyle said the move is not intended to be in response to "any particular situation," but was instead the result of a request by the leaders of the U.S. Pa-

cific Command — which is in charge of all military presence in the Pacific theater — to have an increased bomber presence in the Pacific.

Last month, Gen. William Begert, commander of U.S. Pacific Air Forces, told reporters in Washington that such moves are a way of "buying down risk," Pacific Daily News files state.

The Pentagon last month confirmed plans to shift long-range bombers and other warplanes to Guam and elsewhere in Asia and the Pacific to offset a loss of combat power as thousands of American soldiers and Marines in that region depart for duty in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The commander of the 5th Bomb Wing, Col. Greg Biscone, will remain on Guam for this rotation of bombers.

Maj. Robert Puckett, commander of one of the three bombers that arrived yesterday, said that the move will be observed closely by both friends and potential enemies.

"It's significant because of what the B-52s represent. They have the reputation of being the workhorse of combat units, so when they move, people all over the world pay attention, including allies and people who potentially might

not be allies," Puckett said.

The B-52s were built in 1960 and 1961, and are H-model, the newest B-52 model and the only model that is still in use, Andersen officials said.

Capt. Gerald Campbell, an electronic warfare officer on one of the B-52s, said that despite their age, B-52s remain the "backbone of the Air Force combat units."

"The real beauty of this aircraft has been the flexibility to adapt to new missiles and bombs as time went along," he said.

He noted that the B-52s were central to the Linebacker operations during the Vietnam War, many of which were flown out of Guam.

Col. Paul "P.K." White, commander of the 36th Air Base Wing, was not available for comment yesterday, but he issued a written comment emphasizing Andersen's historic ties with the B-52 aircraft.

"Andersen has always been, at its heart and soul, a bomber base — even when there were no bombers present," he wrote. "The last B-52 crews to die in combat ate their last meal at Andersen. So it really means a lot to have B-52s here again."

Campbell said that though the newer and more costly B-1s are known for their speed and low-flight capabilities and B-2s have far greater stealth maneuvers, the B-52s are still unrivaled in their ability to bomb and destroy ground targets from thousands of feet in the air.

Andersen spokesman Tech. Sgt. Dale Yates said the B-52 bomber has a reputation for being the most feared weapon system in the Air Force.

"It'll be flying at 50,000 feet and the enemy ground forces will never see it, never hear it, and all of a sudden, the earth will explode," he described.

Meyle said the decision to make Guam the rotational home to the B-52s was based on a number of factors, such as strategic location, community support, infrastructure and airspace. She added that the base is hoping it is a sign of more to come.

Puckett said that from a pilot's perspective, the move from North Dakota to Guam is excellent.

"It's great," he said. "We're going to fly more than we do at home, and when we're not flying, we're on a beautiful tropical island. It doesn't get much better than that."

Fiji lawmakers blow 2004 travel budget

SUVA, Fiji (FijiSUN/PIR)—Parliament has exhausted its \$70,000 annual budget allocation for overseas travel by its members in less than two months.

And it does not have enough funds for its overall operations for the rest of the year.

Parliament Secretary General Mary Chapman said this was a serious issue that required consideration at the highest level.

Ms. Chapman confirmed that the secretariat would seek more funds from the Ministry of Finance to assist with its operations.

Ms. Chapman said the legislature was allocated only \$70,000 for its travel budget compared to \$200,000 in previous years and, in view of its reduced budget, Parliament could not

pay for the proposed trips to Canada and Papua New Guinea by a Senate ad hoc Committee next month.

Similarly, its annual budget was reduced by more than \$400,000 from the previous years.

A letter has been sent to the Prime Minister's Office seeking funds to help with the trips, which will cost \$36,000.

The committee had also decided on a cost-effective approach with members agreeing to forego their business class travel privileges and travel economy class and be divided into two groups.

"A cost-effective approach has been an ongoing consideration of the committee, an example being their decision to travel by boat to Vanua Levu and back, for the visit to the north. Their ultimate goal is to produce a quality

product that will be useful in policy formulation and implementation that covers a wide spectrum of social and economic development."

Ms. Chapman said the Secretariat would take up the funding issue with the appropriate ministries as well as the Prime Minister's Office.

"The Parliament decides as to when and how Parliamentary Committees should be established or what Bills are to be committed to sector committees. The inadequate funding of the legislature has been and still is an issue that requires serious consideration," she said.

Prime Minister's Office chief executive officer Jioji Kotobalavu confirmed the Secretariat had made an overture seeking funds for the trips.

would be used to fund the CPA's 10 percent share of all grants that it would be getting for the next 10 years.

The Passenger Facility Fee is similar to terminal/departure fee that is being collected in the Philippines and Palau, which collect \$10 and \$20 respectively.

Salas said, though, all U.S. airports are allowed up to \$4.50 only in the amount it can collect from passengers.

"Majority of U.S. airports are doing this. Passengers do not shell out cash; the amount is included in their airline tickets as the terminal tax," explained the executive director.

experiencing shortfall in the last two years," said the executive director.

The implementation of the PFC is part of the rate study conducted by Ricondo and Associates in efforts to help the CPA meet its debt obligations. In the last two years, CPA was placed on the Credit Watch of the Fitch and IBCA rating agency for its failure to meet its obligations.

Also, the new fee is intended to mitigate the possibility of another year of shortfall on the airport side and to finance the 1.25 bond ratio being implemented by the Franklin Fund.

The rest of the money generated

CPA

From Page 1

Marianas the purpose of Passenger Facility Charge and the role that the airline firms would play once it is implemented.

The PFC is expected to provide the 10-percent matching fund required of the CPA for its Airport Improvement Projects under the U.S. Department of Transportation-FAA.

"We can get our 10-percent matching fund of our AIPs from the PFC and it would also help us meet our debt service obligation, in which we are

He said the USDE has now put its feet down, telling the college that such practice cannot be tolerated anymore.

NMC vice president Chas Algaier said he received the notice today and has relayed it to the NMC administrators on Tinian and Rota.

BoR members, who met with the faculty and staff yesterday amid the recent changes in college leadership, noted the need to inform the affected students about the Pell Grant issue immediately.

There are about 40 students from each satellite campus who receive the federal financial aid.

Meantime, Basa informed the board and staff that NMC has received Pell Grant reimbursement for spring and summer 2003.

He said the college is now awaiting the fall 2003 reimbursement.

The USDE placed the college on a reimbursement basis last year after it failed to submit required audit compliance reports in the past four years. The NMC

used to get Pell Grant money in advance.

Pell Grant provides college loans to low-income students nationwide, either individually or through the college. Unlike a loan, Pell Grant does not have to be repaid. Generally, Pell Grant awards are given to undergraduate students pursuing an Associate or Bachelors degree.

NMC earlier said that the maximum award it received for 2001-2002 was \$3,750. The previous award it received amounted to \$3,300. The award in-

SVES PTA meeting today

San Vicente Elementary School's Parent-Teacher Association will be holding its monthly meeting today, Feb. 24, at 6pm, at the school cafeteria. One of the topics to be discussed will be the school-wide reading assessment results. Guests include PSS State Board of Education Chairman Roman Benavente. For more information, contact the main office at 664-3981.

REYES

From Page 1

the residents of the Commonwealth," explained Reyes.

According to him, he is most grateful for the support extended to him during his years in the office, adding that those years were momentous times in the history of the local Republican Party.

Because of his resignation, Reyes would not be able to pursue plans of aligning the party with the GOP National Party, currently headed by U.S. President Bush. He expressed confidence, though, that local party members would proceed with the efforts to help Washington Rep. Pete A. Tenorio in his bid for a non-voting Delegate status at the U.S. Congress.

"The GOP here is only an adopted name and we should align with the National Party. There is nothing to lose and we should have a delegate on the national party convention. If we align the local GOP with the National Party Committee, it would help Rep. Pete A. Tenorio's bid to the nonvoting delegation status. Who else can help him but the GOP National chair, president Bush?" Reyes explained.

After his resignation takes effect, Reyes said he would concentrate on resolving the problems facing the Retirement Fund.

"They [retirees] worked so hard and we don't want to jeopardize their pension. That would put everything in jeopardy. Don't mess with anyone's paycheck. I want to concentrate on this and help our retirees. I want to assure them that there would be no interruption to services," said Reyes.

He also lauded Torres, who would be replacing him as GOP chair, as no neophyte to the political arena. Torres had served as first vice president for a term and half.

"As far as the integral officers of the party, Regina has been around for more than four years and she's been in the political arena for years," he added.

Reyes said his resignation is an opportunity for the younger generation to lead the CNMI Republican Party.

He assured his party-mates, though, that he would be of assistance, if needed.

NMC ROTA

From Page 1

are from separate campuses," he said in an interview.

He said, though, that the NMC leadership had gone ahead with the submission of applications for all qualified NMC students from the three campuses, assuming that they are all eligible.

As such, qualified Rota and Tinian students have been receiving Pell Grant money until now.

creases every year to compensate for higher tuition costs as well as other increased educational expenses.

Basa said the college has petitioned the USDE to include Tinian and Rota qualified students for Pell Grant scholarship.

"We have yet to hear from them [USDE]," he said.

College authorities said that Tinian and Rota students can still avail themselves of scholarship grants from the local government.

Higher Educ Act gets Senate's partial OK

Army enlistment testing on Saipan

Army recruiters from the U.S. Army Recruiting Detachment on Guam will be on Saipan from Feb. 24 to 27 to visit Saipan's high schools and to test young men and women for service in the U.S. Army and Army Reserve.

They will be available to answer any question people may have about joining the U.S. Army, including incentives like money for college, skill training, guaranteed pay and entitlements, travel, adventure, medical and dental care, 20-year retirement and much more.

All interested are encouraged to take the test. Additional Army Reserve opening are available to fill vacancies in an additional Army Reserve unit, which is opening on Saipan. Jobs for both males and females are opening at the new Saipan unit.

The test will be administered

at the U.S. Army Reserve Center in Puerto Rico. The test will be given this Friday, Feb. 27, at 4:30pm, and Saturday, Feb. 28, at 12:30pm.

Sergeant First Class Albert Abadam, Sergeant First Class Christopher Cooper, and Sergeant Felimarie Benavente can be contacted during the test days at the Hyatt Regency Saipan at 234-1234.

Young men and women between the ages of 17-34, all high school seniors and high school graduates are encouraged to contact SFC Abadam or SGT Benavente to see if they can qualify for Army service.

Prior to their visit to Saipan, the recruiters may be contacted at the U.S. Army Recruiting Detachment on Guam at telephone numbers 671-477-7666 or 671-477-7330; or you can call the U.S. Army Reserve Center at 322-6680 to reserve a test seat.

By **MARIAN A. MARAYA**
REPORTER

The Senate approved yesterday the partial passage of the bill proposing to subject Northern Marianas College's personnel hiring and firing practices to Civil Service Commission rules and regulations.

The proposed Higher Education Act of 2004 or Senate Bill 14-22 was adopted on first reading during a session on Monday, with eight out of nine senators voting in favor of the measure's passage. The bill will still have to go through final reading before it can be considered passed by the Senate.

Senate Vice President Diego M. Songao, the bill's author, expressed his disagreement over claims that the legislation would jeopardize the accreditation of the college.

"I want to clarify that this bill would only use CSC rules and

regulations when appointing or firing of staff and faculty of NMC. It's not taking away from the president the authority to hire and terminate. It's just that due process will be provided. . . I maintain that this bill will strengthen the accreditation by adding stability in the hiring and firing of NMC employees," Songao said during floor discussion.

Sen. Thomas P. Villagomez, who held the sole dissenting vote, said that NMC should keep its autonomy to decide on its own personnel matters.

"If due process is the issue, there is due process at NMC," the Saipan senator argued.

"NMC should be provided autonomy. I always maintain that the [Board of Regents] has its own fiduciary responsibility and they do have hiring rules and regs. They have their own policy in there. And like any other agency, they must provide their employees due process in the hiring or termination of their contracts,"



Songao

Villagomez later told reporters.

Sen. Luis Crisostimo threw his support behind SB 14-22, noting that "NMC needs a lot of help."

Senate Floor Leader Paul A. Manglona, for his part, keyed in a "yes" vote with admitted reservation. The Rota senator disclosed plans to study the bill further with the Senate legal counsel.

The proposed Higher Education Act of 2004 seeks to mandate NMC to comply with due

process protections outlined in the Civil Service Act in appointing or terminating NMC employees.

The legislation, according to Songao, arose from the controversy surrounding the termination of 11 NMC employees.

"I'm amending an existing law. . . so that any appointments or termination of staff or faculty of the college must be [done pursuant to] CSC regulations," the author explained.

The bill specifically seeks to amend 3 CMC § 1316(n).

The Senate passed yesterday a total of eight bills, including the Higher Education Act.

Others that mustered approval include the Board of Education Student Rep. Act (SB 14-7) and the bill to provide educational financial assistance liability of returning college students who cannot find employment in the CNMI due to budgetary limitations (SB-14-2), among others.



Rahaman and Westbrook

PIC names Feb. outstanding employees

Pacific Islands Club Saipan has named two of its staff as its February Employees of the Month, congratulating them for their outstanding efforts and dedication to the team.

Michelle Westbrook was honored the "Heart of the House" Employee of the Month. She has been working at PIC for eight months as part of PIC's Food & Beverage team.

According to a statement from PIC, Michelle has dedicated her efforts to improve restaurant and bar menus as Food & Beverage Administrative Assistant. It said that she has completed many collateral items such as the new Galley and Seaside Grill menus in a timely, professional manner.

"Michelle is hard working,

polite, responsible and often assists her coworkers. Her efforts and outstanding day-to-day performance are highly appreciated," the statement added.

Atiqur Rahaman was awarded "Front of the House" Employee of the Month. The PIC statement said that Atiqur has worked diligently as a waiter in The Magellan for several years and has mastered his work as a beverage server.

"He has clearly become an outstanding role model for his coworkers by graciously serving the guests and ensuring the cleanliness of the restaurant. Atiqur is outgoing, smiles and makes a sincere effort to ensure that guests have a pleasant dining experience at PIC," the PIC statement said.

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TEAM AMIGAS DONATES

The local Saipan women's car club, Team Amigas, recently held a fundraising car wash and donated the proceeds, \$150, to the American Red Cross. The Club thanks the community for supporting their club and the American Red Cross. In picture are, from left, Yvonne, Selina, Elsie, Jennifer and Sydney. Also pictured are little amigas members Riana and Selina.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Deleon Guerrero assumes new post at NMC

The Northern Marianas College Board of Regents has named Dean of Community Programs and Services Antonio V. Deleon Guerrero acting President of NMC following the resignation of former President Kenneth Wright late Friday, February 20.

Following recent board concerns about financial issues and a warning from the Western Association of Schools and Colleges Junior Accreditation

Commission, Wright told the board in a special meeting, "I accept full responsibility for the loss of your confidence that necessitates this unhappy conclusion to our professional relationship," and said he would vacate his office that same day.

On behalf of the Board of Regents, Chair Kimberlyn King-Hinds called for a general assembly of all college employees at 3pm yesterday in Room D-1 to introduce the acting president.

Deleon Guerrero was born on Saipan and graduated from Father Duenas Memorial High School on Guam. He received an associate degree from Lassen Community College in Susanville, California, a bachelor's degree in tourism from the University of Nevada Las Vegas, and a master's degree in educational leadership from San Diego State University.

He first began working at NMC as an adjunct instructor

in tourism while working at the Hyatt Regency Saipan and later joined the college full-time in that field in 1988. He built and became department chair of the Visitor Industry Program and was promoted to Dean of Professional Programs in 1995. In 1999, he was named Director of Institutional Development and served in that capacity until 2002 when the college was recognized and he became Dean of Community Programs and Services.

Applications open for int'l student confab

The 56th Japan-America Student Conference will be held this year from July 21 to Aug. 20, 2004, with the theme "Re-evaluating the Japan-America Relationship: Civic Commitment to Global Issues."

This year, the 56th JASC will begin when 40 American delegates arrive in Hawaii for the American orientation on July 21. The Japanese delegation will arrive on July 25. After a two-day joint-orientation, both delegations will begin their pursuit of the 56th JASC objectives and the 2004 theme.

The 56th JASC goals include addressing contemporary issues that affect the United States and Japan; exploring the basis for civic commitment and responsibility; cultivating mutual understanding; seeking viable means of reform to pertinent issues; forming meaningful friendships; creating cultural appreciation and sensitivity; promoting lifelong learning; and fostering student leadership.

American delegates will be selected from all fields of study and will range from 1st year college students to Ph.D. candidates. Delegates need not be Asian studies majors or studying Japanese language because English is the primary language of the conference.

While U.S. citizenship or permanent resident status is preferred, the only eligibility requirement is full-time student standing. Each applicant will be asked to submit short answer essays, an autobiographical essay, a writing sample, a current transcript and letters of recommendation. Upon selection, delegates will prepare a roundtable-related presentation prior to the conference.

For the 56th JASC, the participation fee is \$2,000, which covers all food, lodging and group travel for the duration of the conference. Travel between each conference location is included in this fee. Roundtrip domestic transportation to the American Orientation site, Honolulu, and from the final destination, Princeton, NJ, is the responsibility of the individual delegate.

Organizers pointed out, though, that each year a considerable number of delegates—80 percent of American delegates for the 55th JASC—receive full or partial financial support from their universities or other organizations.

Upon selection, JASC Inc. and the American Executive Committee can provide advice for locating and obtaining scholarships and financial aid.

Applications for the 56th JASC must be postmarked by March 1, 2004. Applications may be printed from the website at www.jasc.org/.

This year also marks the 70th anniversary of JASC. In com-

memoration of this special year, an alumni reunion will take place the weekend of July 29-August 2 in Honolulu, Hawaii.

During the alumni reunion, the year's delegation will exchange views with a wide variety of accomplished alumni from both the U.S. and Japan.

The conference will then begin its schedule of traveling to four American cities over the course of four weeks during which the students will engage in academic roundtable discussions, cultural and social events, lectures and panel presentations, fieldtrips and 70th anniversary celebrations with alumni from across the U.S. and Japan.

The tour schedule is:

July 21-Aug. 1	East-West Center, Honolulu, Hawaii
July 21-24	American Orientation
July 29-Aug. 2	Alumni Reunion
Aug. 2-4	Mills College, San Francisco, Calif & Homestay
Aug. 5-11	George Washington University, Washington, D.C.
Aug. 12-20	Princeton University, Princeton, NJ

JASC said these experiences will provide a foundation for mutual understanding and social awareness, cultural sensitivity, and an academic challenge of ideas.

"More importantly, the bonds that will form as a result of the 80 students living and working together will offer the basis for lifelong friendships that will further strengthen the ties between Japan and the United States," the organizers said in a statement.

Delegates will serve on one of the eight Roundtables, each of which is related to the 56th JASC theme. As members of a roundtable, delegates will participate in frequent table meetings that last from one to three hours. During these table sessions, delegates will engage in active discussions, field trips, lectures, and panel presentations that focus on their respective Table Topics.

The specific approach taken to each roundtable will be decided by the delegates upon arrival to the conference.

In order to establish a foundation of knowledge, delegates will research an issue related to their Table Topics prior to the conference and compose a written paper to be shared with members of their respective roundtables.

Additionally, delegates will frequently collaborate with other roundtables to share and generate new ideas and perspective. The materials discussed in the roundtable and joint roundtable sessions will then serve as the foundation for the Forum, which will conclude the 56th JASC experience.

Guam education officials indicted

HAGATNA, Guam (PDN/PIR)—The recent indictments of former Department of Education Superintendent Rosie Tainatongo and two other employees may not be the last for the department.

Attorney General Douglas Moylan said his office is conducting other investigations into the former DOE administration as part of a string of ongoing government corruption cases his office is tackling.

"Because it has the largest budget and the most number of employees, and because in the past administration there were allegations, we have multiple investigations going on with DOE," Moylan said. "Based upon the complaints that our office has received, the investigations are rising out of the last administration."

Moylan's office is also prosecuting other high-ranking officials, including former governor Carl Gutierrez, his former Cabinet officials, former Department of Administration Director Clifford Guzman, former airport executive manager Gerald Yingling and former power agency general manager Thelma Ann Perez.

Friday's indictments of Tainatongo and two current employees have shined a light on accountability issues that the education board said it will continue to focus on.

Tainatongo, former DOE chief, Raymond Miranda, former DOE controller and Ignacio Fejeran, the coordinator of non-appropriated funds at the DOE Business Office, were indicted on charges of authorizing the use of \$5,000 of DOE's funds to pay for a Liberation Day Queen candidate.

Fejeran is the stepfather of Venus Larimer, the 2002 Liberation Day Queen who was sponsored by the DOE Employees Association, Pacific Daily News files state.

Romeo Hernandez, chairman of the Guam Education Policy Board, said there were many accountability issues the board discussed at its inception.

Hernandez said the board can serve a watchdog function over DOE's high officials to ensure accountability by possibly having the board screen transactions of large amounts that the department makes.

"Maybe it is time to revisit those ideas," Hernandez said. "I would say this, on behalf of the board, that we are concerned about the transparency of the department."

Hernandez said the board is trying to hire a chief financial officer for the department who also is a certified public accountant.

Jose Nededog, board vice chairman, said Tainatongo, Miranda and Fejeran are innocent until proven guilty. He also said he is sure discussions on the current employees, Fejeran and Miranda, will be raised in tomorrow's board meeting.

"I'm sure we'll be bringing this issue on the table," Nededog said. "But the matter is under the operational jurisdiction of the superintendent."

DOE Superintendent Juan Flores said he was surprised by the indictment, but the department will do everything it can to cooperate with the investigations.

"I'm not sure (the indictment) necessarily reflects on what's going on with the department now," Flores said. "But we will make sure we are held accountable and that we are willing to do whatever it takes to be accountable."

Flores said he will be meeting with his legal counsel and the Equal Employment Relations office to decide on what procedures must be followed in handling indictments of current employees. **(PDN/PIR)**

Cook Islanders raise \$127,612 for Niue relief

ALOFI, Niue (Niue News/PIR)—People of the Cook Islands have raised \$127,612.53 for Niue reconstruction in the wake of Cyclone Heta, reports Pacific Affairs correspondent John Andrews.

Cooks' police minister Peri Vaevae Pare presented a check for that amount to Niue's high commissioner to New Zealand, Hima Takelesi, at a special ceremony in the Cook Islands Auckland consulate last Monday.

Norman George, a Cook Islands politician who chaired the appeal fund, said the entire Cooks community became involved in the fund raising effort.

Unable to have their live pigs transported to Rarotonga for the designated Niue relief day, some outer islands residents cooked them instead for

local consumption then sent the resulting proceeds to the fund organizers.

Cook islanders raised a total of \$105,000 that day.

With \$10,000 the Cook Islands Government kicked in, the final total topped \$127,000. Bearing in mind the Cooks' population of about 12,000, said Mr George, it had been estimated New Zealand would need to raise \$400 million to match the donation on a per capita basis.

Mr. Pare said the Cooks had also sent Niue two containers of clothing and food.

Mr. Takelesi said Niue could have been in far more serious trouble if Cyclone Heta had struck at night. By hitting during daylight hours, Niueans were fortunate to be able to see what to hang on to, he said.

Disney says it's not losing creative edge

By GARY GENTILE
AP BUSINESS WRITER

BURBANK, Calif. (AP)—With the Walt Disney Co. under attack from former board members, a former partner and a company that wants to buy it, one of the complaints is that Disney has lost its creative spark, especially when it comes to the animated films that are its heritage.

It's a charge quickly refuted by Dick Cook, chairman of Walt Disney Studios since 2002.

"I think creativity at our studio has never been more on the upswing," Cook said. "I think we have more great projects, both in live action and animation, than we have had in years."

As head of the studio division, Cook is perhaps the most critical player in Disney's defensive strategy. Time will tell if he is right.

Disney is facing the end of its lucrative partnership with Pixar Animation Studios in two years. Pixar chief Steve Jobs recently ended 10 months of negotiations for a new deal, singling out Disney's animated films for harsh criticism. Over the past five years, Pixar has contributed more than half of Disney's studio profits, financial analysts say.

On Feb. 11, cable TV giant Comcast Corp. made an unsolicited bid for Disney, saying

one of its main goals would be to reinvigorate the company's flagging in-house animation efforts. Disney's board rejected the bid, saying it would consider other bids while expressing strong support for current management.

The struggling animation unit also is cited by disgruntled former board members Stanley Gold and Roy E. Disney, son of company co-founder Roy O. Disney, in their efforts to oust chief executive Michael Eisner.

Cook, however, has so far escaped the critics' wrath.

"I think he is a first-rate executive, and it would be my hope that in future years he would have a greater role in the company," Gold said. "He has a mature judgment."

That kind of praise has been fed by the successes of Cook's division in 2003, when it took in \$3 billion at box offices worldwide, the first time any studio reached that level. Part of that success was due to the Pixar film "Finding Nemo," which sold \$340 million worth of tickets in 2003.

But Disney also had the hit "Pirates of the Caribbean: Curse of the Black Pearl," which sold \$304 million in tickets. Huge profits also came from inexpensive films, such as "Freaky Friday" and "Holes" that were box office surprises.

Now it is up to the mild-mannered Cook—so mild-mannered he frequently uses the word "gosh"—to continue the company's success with live-action films and direct-to-video sequels while revamping the company's stumbling animation department.

He said he isn't being distracted by recent events.

"Michael (Eisner) has been very clear with all of us and certainly with me that the best thing we can do at this time is perform at the highest levels," Cook said.

"For us, it's trying to keep the momentum going and just keep working."

"These jobs are like being a baseball manager," he said. "Everyone wants to be one. Everyone has an opinion."

Cook, 53, has been immersed in Disney his entire adult life, having begun his career in 1970 as a steam train operator at Disneyland.

"Everytime you put the name on a film, it means something. The bar is awfully high. You want to be able to go over that bar," he said.

Cook's most immediate and daunting task is to find a way to replace the revenue generated by Pixar.

Pixar has two films left to deliver on its current contract—"The Incredibles," this year and "Cars" in 2005. It will become a competitor when it finds a new studio to join.

Meanwhile, Disney has cut its own animation staff from a high of 2,200 in 1999 to about 600 and closed satellite animation studios in Paris, Tokyo and Orlando, Fla. It also cut the cost of making an animated film in half since 1998 and, for the first time, has no traditional hand-drawn animated films in production.

Yet Cook said Disney is not surrendering in the animation business.

"We have been and always will be committed to creating the finest animation in the world," he said during a recent gathering of financial analysts in Orlando.

Disney ruled animation through much of the 1990s with hits such as "The Lion King" and "Beauty and the Beast." The division also produced expensive flops such as "Atlantis" and "Treasure Planet," along with modest successes such as "Lilo & Stitch" and "Brother Bear."

Cook said he is confident Disney still knows how to make animated hits and that it will succeed in making sequels to

the Pixar films it continues to own, such as "Toy Story."

"We're certainly not interested in destroying value or destroying these franchises," Cook said in Orlando. "We think they've got a long, long life for years and years to come and some of the greatest characters that have been developed in the last decade."

Cook joined the motion picture group in 1980 as an assistant domestic sales manager, and in 1988 became head of distribution.

In 1994, he assumed control of film marketing and became known for his large-scale movie premieres. In 1995, he shut down the Great Lawn in New York's Central Park for the premiere of "Pocahontas."

As studio chief, he has nurtured relationships with filmmakers such as Jerry Bruckheimer and M. Night Shyamalan. He also has attracted new directors and actors to Disney, including Wes Anderson, director of 2001's "The Royal Tenenbaums," and this year's "Life Aquatic," starring Bill Murray.

Cook's success comes from producing a mix of big-budget, high profile films with smaller, less costly movies. Last year, his gambles paid off handsomely.

A second strategy Disney pioneered is making direct-to-video sequels, especially of animated films.



Cook

Armani, Dubai group launch hotel chain

MILAN, Italy (AP)—Giorgio Armani, the Italian fashion designer known for classy looking clothes collections, is teaming up with a Dubai-based company to launch a collection of luxury hotels and resorts.

In a statement Sunday, Giorgio Armani Spa said it signed a letter of intent for the project with EMAAR Properties PJSC.

Over the next seven years, 10 hotels and four vacation resorts will be opened in London, Paris, New York, Tokyo, Shanghai, Milan and Dubai, the statement said.

"We have been exploring the idea of bringing the Armani philosophy of design and style to hotels for many years," the designer was quoted as say-

ing in the statement.

Armani, sole owner of his namesake company, and Emaar Chairman Mohammed al-Abbar told Dow Jones Newswires Saturday about the global chain entailing more than U.S. \$1 billion in investments over the next six to eight years. Armani will oversee the hotels' design and styling.

Cash-rich Emaar, responsible for real estate and management, is likely to carry most of the development costs, though details of the financial arrangement haven't been completed.

"I'm leaning toward a royalties-type deal," al-Abbar, who approached Armani a little more than a year ago, when he learned Armani was consider-

ing opening a hotel chain, told Dow Jones.

Armani has long been expanding his horizons, from women's and men's clothing to home furnishings and other designer items.

Armani and al-Abbar are betting on an upturn in the tourism industry, after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, the SARS scare and an economic downturn discouraged traveling. Travelers, both for tourism and business, will always frequent the world's most important cities, Armani said.

Armani said his company would also benefit from selling merchandise to the hotels, including furniture, staff wardrobes and guest amenities such as toiletries.

Tokyo stocks open higher; dollar up

TOKYO (AP)—Tokyo stocks opened higher Monday as investors welcomed the dollar's strength against the Japanese yen. The Nikkei Stock Average of 225 issues was up 24.36 points, or 0.23 percent, at 10,745.05 points shortly after the open. On Friday, the index fell 33.11 points, or 0.31 percent.

The dollar was trading at 108.70 yen at 9 a.m. Monday, up 0.79 yen from late Friday in Tokyo but below the 109.10 yen it bought in New York later that day.

On the stock market, technology and other exporter issues

attracted buying on the back of the dollar's strength against the yen.

The main index of all issues on the Tokyo Stock Exchange's First Section gained 0.26 points, or 0.02 percent, to 1,059.02. The TOPIX fell 0.75 points, or 0.07 percent, on Friday.

Tokyo markets ignored Wall Street's weakness Friday.

The Dow Jones industrial average finished down 45.70, or 0.4 percent, at 10,619.03 on Friday. The Nasdaq composite index fell 8.03, or 0.4 percent, to 2,037.93.

In currency trading, the dollar remained higher against the yen after rallying to a three-month high Friday in New York following Japan's raising of its security alert to its highest level.

The euro bought \$1.2479, down from \$1.2640 late Friday in Tokyo. Against the yen, the European currency was quoted at 135.94 yen, down from 136.28 yen.

The yield on Japan's benchmark 10-year government bond rose to 1.2100 percent from 1.1900 percent late Friday. Its price fell 0.18 to 100.78 points.

Cable TV billionaire giving away fortune

PHILADELPHIA (AP)—H.F. "Gerry" Lenfest and his wife, Marguerite, have given away about one-third of their \$1 billion fortune over the past four years, and they say they want to give it all away before they die.

After four decades building a cable television business that made them one of America's wealthiest couples, the Lenfests are spending the profits on charity.

Their three children—already wealthy from the sale of the cable business to Comcast—will get no more money if the couple have their way. The couple also wants foundations that survive them to have spent every penny within 20 years of their deaths.

Gerry Lenfest, 73, said he saw many charitable institutions lose effectiveness after their founders died and decided the bulk of the family's fortune should not end up in long-lasting endowments.

"During your lifetime, you can direct how your wealth is spent for the most good," he said. "But after your death, it

is problematic. You don't have the control."

So far, the couple have given or pledged about \$325 million of their earnings from the sale of the cable business the family began building in 1974.

Columbia University, Wilson College and Washington and Lee University have each received gifts of between \$16 million and \$18 million. The Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts, and the Chesapeake Bay Foundation are among many organizations that have received Lenfest money.

Gerry Lenfest was a lawyer and an executive at Triangle Publications, a company owned by another philanthropist, Walter Annenberg, when he borrowed \$2.3 million to buy a small cable television system in Lebanon, Pa.

When Lenfest sold the system to Comcast Corp. in 2000, it had grown to 1.2 million subscribers in Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware. The sale netted the Lenfest family about \$1.2 billion.

STOCK	
ASIAN MARKETS	
Hong Kong	10,745.05
Taiwan	10,745.05
Japan	10,745.05
South Korea	10,745.05
Thailand	10,745.05
Philippines	10,745.05
Indonesia	10,745.05
Singapore	10,745.05
Malaysia	10,745.05
Brunei	10,745.05
LEADING INDICATORS	
DOW	10,619.03
NASDAQ	2,037.93
S&P	1,144.11
INDUSTRY MARKET	
Automotive	1,144.11
Health Care	1,144.11
Technology	1,144.11
Energy	1,144.11
Telecom	1,144.11
Real Estate	1,144.11
Food & Beverage	1,144.11
Chemicals	1,144.11
Metals	1,144.11
Textiles	1,144.11
Other	1,144.11





World

Life & Style

Depp, Theron win SAG acting honors

By DAVID GERMAIN
AP MOVIE WRITER

Johnny Depp was a surprise lead actor winner Sunday at the Screen Actors Guild Awards for "Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl," while Charlize Theron took the best-actress honor for the serial-killer drama "Monster."

Depp, who did not attend the awards, won for his role as a jittery buccaneer in the summer blockbuster, beating out Sean Penn, who had been considered the favorite for "Mystic River."

Theron won for her portrayal of executed murderer Aileen Wuornos, a role for which the actress gained 30 pounds and obscured her cover-girl beauty behind false teeth, dark contact lenses and a splotchy complexion.

"I'm so honored and proud to be an actor, 'cause God knows, I don't know what else to do," said Theron, a native of South Africa. She thanked her cast mates and director Patty Jenkins, along with "my angel and my date tonight, my mom, who put me on the plane with a one-way ticket to Hollywood when I was 19 years old. Thank you for being so brave and letting me go to make my dreams come true."

The supporting acting awards went to Tim Robbins for the brooding drama "Mystic River" and Renee Zellweger for the Civil War saga "Cold Mountain."

The ensemble acting award, the guild's equivalent of a best-picture prize, went to "The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King," the front-runner to win the top honor at next Sunday's Academy Awards.

The SAG wins boost the individual actors' Oscar prospects. Theron, Rob-

Springer opera wins big at Olivier Awards

LONDON (AP)—"Jerry Springer—The Opera," an exuberant tribute to the American talk show, triumphed at the Laurence Olivier Awards Sunday, winning four awards including best new musical.

David Bedella, the show's smooth-talking Satan, was named best actor in a musical at the Oliviers, the British equivalent of Broadway's Tony awards.

"Jerry Springer," which transferred in November from the subsidized National Theater to London's commercial West End, also won awards for best sound design and best performance in a supporting role in a musical—awarded to the entire 27-strong chorus.

The award for best actress in a musical went to Maria Friedman for "Ragtime."

Best actor in a play went to Matthew Kelly—better known as a

television host—for "Of Mice and Men." Best actress was Dame Eileen Atkins for "Honour" at the National.

Best director went to Michael Grandage for his Donmar Warehouse production of Albert Camus' "Caligula," while a revival of Stephen Sondheim's "Pacific Overtures," also at the Donmar, was named outstanding musical production.

Dame Judi Dench received a special award for her contributions to British theater. The award was presented by actor Kevin Spacey, who serenaded Dench onstage with Gershwin's "I've Got A Crush On You."

The Olivier awards are presented annually by The Society of London Theater to honor achievement in London theater, opera, and dance. Named for the late actor Lord Olivier, the prizes are voted on by panels made up of industry professionals and members of the general public.

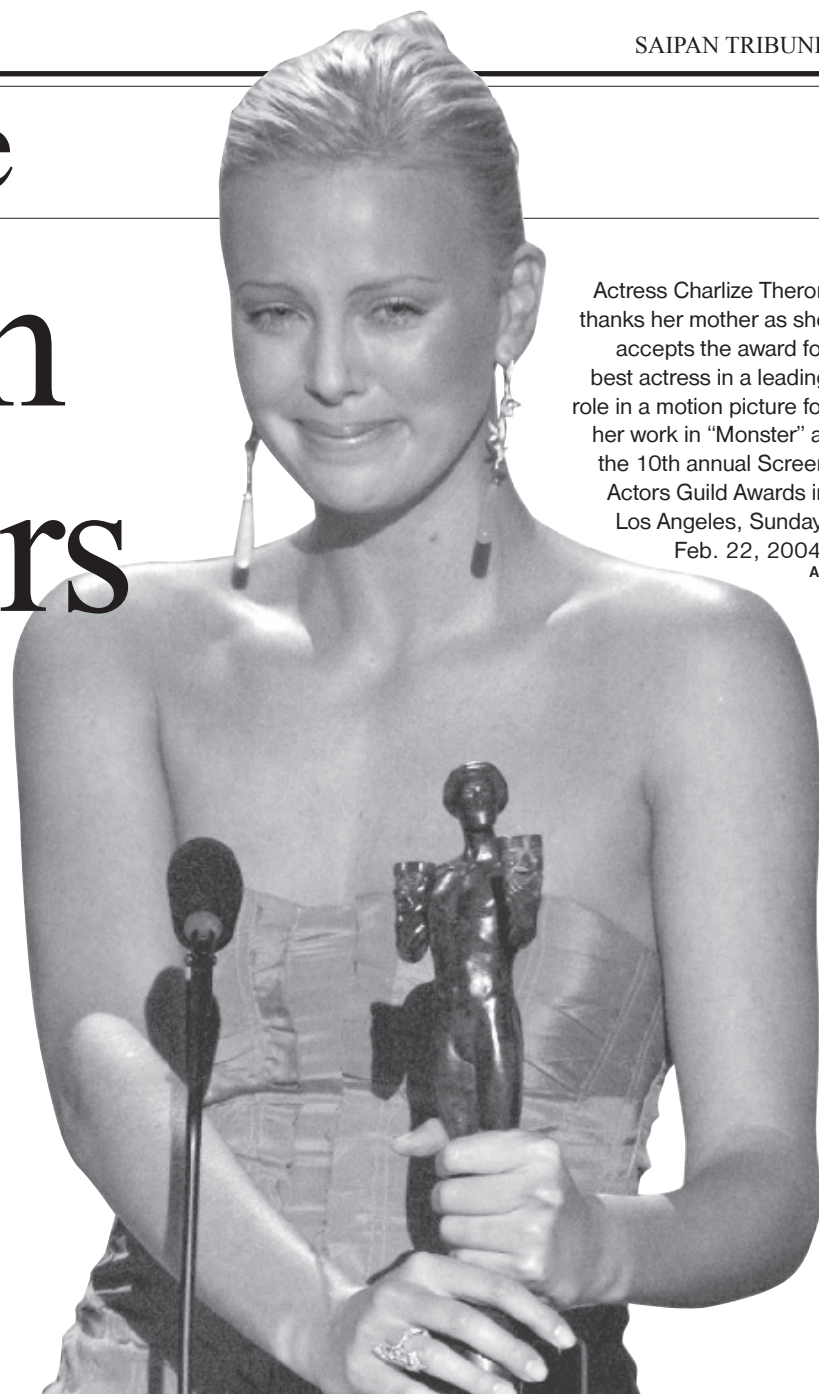
bins and Zellweger have been viewed as front-runners through awards season, and guild honors provide one last push among Oscar voters, who must cast their ballots by the end of the day Tuesday.

Robbins won for his role as a man emotionally crippled by childhood trauma and suspected of murder as an adult in "Mystic River."

"Oh, boy. That's so cool. Susan's got one of these," Robbins said, referring to his romantic partner Susan Saran-

don, who won the guild's 1996 lead-actress honor for "Dead Man Walking," which Robbins directed. "I'm going to get them alone in a dark room and see what happens."

Zellweger, who won the guild's lead-actress award last year for "Chicago," was honored this time as a salt-of-the-earth Confederate handywoman in "Cold Mountain." She thanked co-stars Nicole Kidman and Jude Law and director Anthony Minghella.



Actress Charlize Theron thanks her mother as she accepts the award for best actress in a leading role in a motion picture for her work in "Monster" at the 10th annual Screen Actors Guild Awards in Los Angeles, Sunday, Feb. 22, 2004. AP

"I was spoiled for riches on this experience," Zellweger said. "It was such an honor to go to work every day beside you."

Among the guild's TV awards, "Sex and the City" won for comedy-acting ensemble on the same night the series ended its six-year run. The cast won the same prize two years ago, while star Sarah Jessica Parker won the comedy-actress honor in 2001.

"You guys have been incredibly generous to us over the course of the show," said co-star Kristin Davis, who accepted the award with cast mates Kim Cattrall and Cynthia Nixon. "And so many of you have come to act with us. We've had more good-looking men on our show. ..."

"We will all miss you so much."

Other comedy TV honors went to Megan Mullally for "Will & Grace" and Tony Shalhoub for "Monk."

Kiefer Sutherland of "24" and Frances Conroy of "Six Feet Under" won for best dramatic actor and actress. "Six Feet Under" also was honored for best acting ensemble in a drama.

"Angels in America" earned Meryl Streep and Al Pacino the acting awards for a TV movie or miniseries.

Guild nominees were chosen by 4,200 randomly selected union members. The union's full membership of 98,000 was eligible to vote for winners.

The guild presented its lifetime achievement award to 91-year-old Karl Malden, an Academy Award winner as supporting actor for "A Streetcar Named Desire."

'Passion' revives hope for dying language

By JASON KEYSER
AP WRITER

JERUSALEM (AP)—An ancient, dying language gets a new life on American movie screens this week. Some linguists, who fear the language spoken by Jesus could vanish within a few decades, hope for a boost from Mel Gibson's new film, "The Passion of the Christ," opening Wednesday in U.S. theaters. It is performed entirely in Aramaic and Latin.

Among the few places in the world where Aramaic is still familiar is a small Syrian Orthodox church in Jerusalem, though even here it is little more than an echo these days.

A church elder laments that he has few people to speak to in Aramaic besides the monks. Parts of the liturgy have to be done in Arabic. And a nun who sings the Lord's Prayer says the words are just about the only ones she can recite in Aramaic.

Aramaic was once the lingua franca of the Middle East and parts of Asia. Today, the Syrian Orthodox community in Jerusalem offers Aramaic in summer school, but there is little interest and fewer than half the 600 members speak the language.

"Maybe the new generation will wake up and continue," said Sami Barsoum, 69, a community leader and fluent Aramaic-speaker.

Just a half-million people around the world, mostly Christians, still speak Aramaic at home.

"Undoubtedly, Aramaic is in danger of disappearing," said Moshe Bar-Asher, president of the Academy of the Hebrew Language in Jerusalem.

Aramaic is one of the few languages that has been spoken continuously for thousands of years. It first appeared in written records around the 10th century B.C. although it was likely spoken earlier.

It is a Semitic language and has

similarities with Hebrew and Arabic. Carpenter, for instance, is "nagouro" in Aramaic, "nagar" in Hebrew and "najar" in Arabic.

Aramaic reached its widest influence when it was adopted by the Persian empire around 500 B.C. Written in a 22-letter alphabet—similar to Hebrew's square-shaped letters—it was a relatively simple language, and scribes and intellectuals helped spread it in a largely illiterate world, Bar-Asher said.

Aramaic texts have turned up as far apart as India and Egypt. Jews returning from exile in Babylon around 500 B.C. helped spread the language to the eastern Mediterranean, where it largely supplanted Hebrew.

Scholars believe Jesus might have known Hebrew—which by that time was reserved mainly for use in synagogues and by upper classes—and some Greek, but Aramaic was the language of his native Galilee.

The New Testament records Jesus'

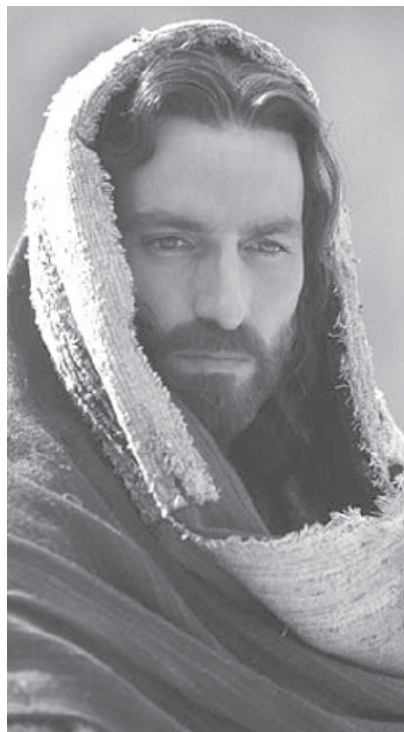
last words on the cross in Aramaic: "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" St. Mark, most likely writing in Greek, adds, "... which means, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'" (Mark 15:34).

Michael Sokoloff, a professor of Hebrew and Semitic languages at Bar-Ilan University near Tel Aviv, said it is believed that parts of the Gospels were originally written in Aramaic, but only Greek writings have been found.

Aramaic was largely replaced by Arabic during the Islamic conquest of the 7th century.

Today, a few people speak it in parts of Iraq, Syria, Turkey, Lebanon, India, Europe, Australia and some U.S. cities, including Chicago.

In Syria, once the core of indigenous Christian Aramaic speakers, the language is still heard among 10,000 people in three villages perched on cliff sides in the Qalamoun Mountains north of Damascus.



Jim Caviezel plays Jesus in a scene from "The Passion of The Christ," a film by Mel Gibson, in this Jan. 2003, publicity photo. AP

Carrie picks Mr. Big, returns to NY

By **FRAZIER MOORE**
AP TELEVISION WRITER

NEW YORK (AP)—Torn between two lovers, Carrie Bradshaw returned to Mr. Big and New York, ditching Aleksandr in Paris, on Sunday's finale of "Sex and the City." Her big decision settled a question this HBO comedy had been building toward for six seasons: What man, if any, would Carrie end up with?

The satisfying answer: Carrie (series star Sarah Jessica Parker) chose the on-again/off-again businessman beau (Chris Noth) with whom she first struck sparks on the series' premiere.

But first, she had to confront her mistake in leaving her world behind to move to Paris with Aleksandr, the self-involved, neglectful artist played by Mikhail Baryshnikov.

"I am someone who's looking for love, real love ... can't-live-without-each-other love—and I don't think that love is here," Carrie tells him.

Moments later, Big, who has come to his senses and raced across the ocean to bring her home, finds her, alone, in her hotel lobby.

"It took me a really long time to get here," he says. "But I'm here. Carrie, you're the one."

After nearly 100 romantic and often raunchy installments, "Sex" closed the book with a top-secret, much-hyped conclusion that made good on its promise to resolve the love life of New York sex columnist Carrie.

Meanwhile, it nicely tied up some details concerning her three gal pals:

- Miranda, the hard-nosed realist played by Cynthia Nixon, remained a happy mother and the wife of bartender Steve, living in Brooklyn (where she opened her heart to Steve's ailing mother, inviting her to come live with them).

- Charlotte, the idealist (Kristin Davis) and her husband, Harry (formerly her divorce



The ladies from HBO's "Sex and the City" pose in this season five publicity photo courtesy from HBO. From left are Kim Cattrall, Cynthia Nixon, Sarah Jessica Parker, and Kristine Davis.

lawyer) got their wish, at last: they'll be adopting a baby girl from China.

- And hot-blooded Samantha (Kim Cattrall) was solid with her boy-toy hunk, Smith, despite the loss of her sex drive from treatment for breast cancer. In a tender moment, he declares his love for her. "You've meant more to me than any man I've ever known," a tear-

ful Samantha replies.

Voila! A few scenes later, she's her lusty self, nude in the sack astride Smith. Her final line is a howl of pleasure.

Back in New York, Carrie surprises her friends at the coffee shop where they've exchanged so many confidences with one another (and viewers) through the years.

Then, as a special treat at the

fadeout, the man Carrie dubbed "Mr. Big" so long ago phones her and, for the first time, viewers learn his real name, displayed on the caller ID: John.

"The most exciting, challenging and significant relationship of all is the one you have with yourself," says Carrie in her role as narrator. "And if you find someone to love the you you love," she concludes, "well,

that's just fabulous."

The Manhattan-set series, which premiered in June 1998, became a cultural phenomenon, defining a new breed of modern woman who wasn't afraid to talk about men—and her desire for them—with raw honesty even as she placed top priority on friendships with other women.

But as the announced end neared, accompanied by a flood of eulogies, a contradictory message was gaining volume: Maybe this won't be the sure-nuff end of "Sex," after all.

The series' top executive, Michael Patrick King, and the show's cast are in discussions with HBO about a movie that would continue the saga, HBO

spokeswoman Tobe Becker confirmed Thursday.

The details remained in doubt. Indeed, in addressing the question two weeks ago, co-producer Parker unleashed a flood of conditionals befitting a politician on the stump.

"I haven't made any decisions about how we might revisit this show and in what medium," she said, listing several unrelated projects that might occupy her for the immediate future.

"It's very important to me that we are dignified and graceful in our exit from the (current) series," Parker declared. "After that, if we hear a cry from the public, I think we have to respond to that, if we can do right by them."

'First Dates' scores again at box office

By **DAVID GERMAIN**
AP MOVIE WRITER

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Moviegoers have not forgotten "50 First Dates." The Adam Sandler-Drew Barrymore romance about a man wooing a memory-challenged woman took in \$21 million to remain the top movie for a second weekend, easily fending off a rush of new flicks, according to studio estimates Sunday.

Lindsay Lohan's girl-power comedy "Confessions of a Teenage Drama Queen" led the weak batch of newcomers, grossing \$9.2 million for the No. 2 spot.

Kurt Russell's hockey holdover "Miracle," the second-place movie the previous two weekends, slipped to No. 3 with \$8 million.

Three other new wide releases debuted poorly. Gene Hackman and Ray Romano's political farce "Welcome to Mooseport," about an ex-president running for small-town mayor against a plumber, was No. 4 with \$7 million.

The teen-raunch comedy "Eurotrip," about a high school graduate's quest to find his dream girl in Germany, opened in fifth place with \$6.6 million.

Meg Ryan's "Against the Ropes," in which she plays female boxing manager Jackie Kallen, premiered a distant No. 8 with \$3 million.

All of the new movies received generally harsh reviews.

The overall box office tumbled, with the top 12 movies grossing \$75.1 million, down 21

percent from the same weekend a year ago, when "Daredevil" and "Old School" led the pack.

February typically is a quiet month for movies, but the slump this week was bigger than usual.

"The level of audience disinterest is pretty stunning. They're just kind of checked out right now," said Paul Dergarabedian, president of box-office tracker Exhibitor Relations. "You had four brand-new attractions, and they really could not make a dent. If not for '50 First Dates,' this would be an abysmal weekend."

Playing in 3,612 theaters, "50 First Dates" averaged \$5,814 a cinema, a strong number for a movie in its second weekend and by far the best average among the top 10 films. The

movie pushed its 10-day gross to \$72.3 million.

The box office should get a boost next weekend with the Ash Wednesday debut of Mel Gibson's "The Passion of the Christ," opening in about 3,000 theaters, a huge release for a religious-themed movie. Gibson orchestrated a grass-roots marketing campaign to promote the film, with Christian leaders spreading the word and church groups buying out theaters.

The movie, starring Jim Caviezel as Jesus, bloodily re-enacts Christ's final hours. It has drawn a storm of criticism from some Jewish and Christian leaders who say it could revive the notion that Jews collectively were responsible for the death of Christ.

Herpes infection is reminder of husband's broken promise

By AVIGAIL VAN BUREN

DEAR ABBY: A young mother wrote that her husband had given her herpes-2, and asked you to help her decide whether to stay or to leave the marriage. She said that the virus was a constant reminder of his indiscretion, and asked if any other man could love her if he knew. Please give her this message:



Dear Abby

I also contracted herpes-2 (HSV-2) from my ex-husband during our marriage. We divorced and I married my soul mate. While we were dating, I told him about the virus and waited to hear him say, "Adios." Instead, to my amazement, his response was, "I love you. This isn't your fault and we'll deal with it."

I, too, am angry during an outbreak because it is a reminder that the person I trusted most betrayed me. But remember that stress is one of the triggers for an outbreak. Then remind yourself that this virus doesn't change who you are inside. You have done nothing wrong. Get all the information you can because knowledge is empowering. No matter what decision you make about your marriage, your heart will heal. My thoughts are with you.

LIVING HAPPILY EVER AFTER

DEAR LIVING: Thank you for the beautiful testimonial that a full life is possible after an HSV-2 diagnosis. People who have this infection often feel isolated because it is not a condition that is easily discussed. For anyone who might have missed it in my previous column, the National Herpes Hotline—(919) 361-8488 operates from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. Eastern time. The staff provides information and referrals to support groups.

I'm pleased to say you are not the only caring reader who wrote to offer support to that young woman. Read on:

DEAR ABBY: I contracted herpes-2 after a one-night stand 10 years ago. Since the age of 17, I have struggled with feelings of anger, humiliation and the fear of never finding love. I, too, felt "robbed of my dignity, my self-image and my future." But I have slowly arrived at the acceptance stage, and so will that young wife.

She can save her marriage if she truly loves her husband "in sickness and health." Living with HSV-2 is possible; many people do it. She should ask herself if she can live without the family unit the two of them have built together.

I am still single since my diagnosis, but I have had two healthy relationships over six years' time. The key is honesty and healthy communication.

LIVING STRONG IN LOS ANGELES

DEAR LIVING STRONG: I agree, and that is true in any healthy relationship. I would be shirking my responsibility as an advice columnist, however, if I didn't point out that more than half of all teenagers today are sexually active. That is why they need clear, concise sex education—beyond "just say no"—to help them avoid sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancies. While most adults prefer that teens and pre-teens abstain from having sex, it is obvious that

DEAR ABBY: My friend "Diane" and I went downtown for a few drinks after work. She drove. At the end of the night, she had a parking ticket. I was surprised when she said I should pay half, especially since she knows money is tight for me right now. I think Diane is being unfair. I wouldn't expect her to pay half of it if it was my ticket. Am I wrong?

CONFUSED IN FLORIDA

DEAR CONFUSED: She provided the transportation. I assume she paid for the gas. Since you were together when she got the parking ticket, it would have been nice if you had OFFERED to pay half the ticket. That's how friends treat each other.

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Abby shares more than 100 of her favorite recipes in two booklets: "Abby's Favorite Recipes" and "More Favorite Recipes by Dear Abby." Send a business-size, self-addressed envelope, plus check or money order for \$10 (U.S. funds)

Church gaining \$30M trust fund



LONDON (AP)—Charlotte Church, the bright-eyed Welsh soprano who has sung for two U.S. presidents, the pope and Queen Elizabeth II, turned 18 on Saturday, meaning she now has control of her \$30 million trust fund.

Church—whose bursts of rebelliousness, family spats and a now-discarded boyfriend have become a tabloid soap opera—now faces the difficult transition from child prodigy to adult star.

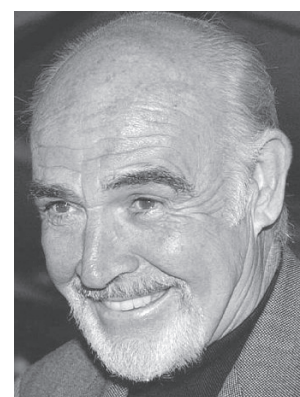
With more than 10 million records sold around the world, the singer's financial future seems secure. But Church said she planned to leave most of the trust-fund money where it was, telling Britain's GMTV television: "I just don't want it. I don't need a lot of money now."

Church's last album of new material appeared in 2001 and there is no set date for a new one. She said she wants to leave behind the light classical musical that endeared her to millions and forge a pop career.

Her next album will include "some rocky stuff, some soulful songs and some electric—it's really mixed," Church told Britain's Daily Mirror in an interview published Friday.

Teenage singing star Charlotte Church leaves an hotel in central London Saturday Feb. 21, 2004, on her way home to celebrate her 18th birthday in Wales later this evening.

AP



Connery denies he'll protest in Taiwan

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP)—Sean Connery says the actor will not be joining Taiwan's human chain protest against China next week as the island's official media had claimed, a spokesman said.

On Thursday, a ruling party official in Taiwan said the Scottish-born actor was considering whether to join the Feb. 28 protest against China's use of missiles to threaten the island.

However, the official media on Saturday cited a U.S.-based agent for Connery who denied the actor ever planned a trip to Taiwan.

"Sean Connery is not now, nor was he ever, planning a trip to Taiwan or Japan," the English-language daily Taipei Times quoted Nancy Seltzer as saying in an e-mail.

The island's "Hand in Hand to Protect Taiwan" protest against China's missiles is a human chain which will stretch across the island over a distance of more than 190 miles, organizers said.

Connery plans to be in Los Angeles to attend the Academy Awards ceremony on Feb. 29, Seltzer told the paper.

David Keith in dispute over house

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. (AP)—Actor David Keith, whose film credits include "An Officer and a Gentleman" and "Daredevil," is in a dispute with movie theater executive Gregory W. Dunn over the right to buy a house.

Keith, a Knoxville native, said he was promised first

right to buy the house where he and his wife have been living. The Knoxville house is owned by retired physician Matthew Bargas.

Dunn, chief operating officer for Knoxville-based Regal Entertainment Group,

said he made a deal with the

doctor to buy the house.

Keith refuses to move out and Bargas' lawyer, C. Paul Harrison, said he would go to court Monday to ask that Keith's claims be rejected and Dunn be allowed buy the house.

Court records show Keith will fight the effort.



Actor David Keith is seen with Democratic presidential hopeful retired Gen. Wesley Clark while attending a women's basketball game in Knoxville, Tenn., Thursday, Feb. 5, 2004.

Tina Turner tours India for film role

BOMBAY, India (AP)—Producer Ismail Merchant says pop diva Tina Turner's two-week tour of India has prepared her for her role as a singing, dancing Indian goddess in a new Merchant-Ivory film.

"The Goddess" will be funny, intelligent and a musical," Merchant said. "It's a film about Shakti. It says women are here to rule and men better accept it."

Shakti is a Hindu goddess of power and energy and the Hindi word also means "strength."

Merchant said Turner, who left India on Wednesday, traveled with him from Varanasi, a holy city in the north, to the beaches of southern Kerala state. She met with Indian singers and dancers to prepare for the role.

"In a few weeks she has been given a big dose of Indian culture," said Merchant, who has produced dozens of movies with American director James Ivory.

Merchant said the movie would also star Matthew Modine, who plays a jealous husband in Merchant-Ivory's recent comedy "Le Divorce," which has garnered good reviews.

Pastimes

WONDERWORD

By DAVID QUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle. Circles indicate letters that can be used to form a word. Do not circle the word. The letters in the circles are the only letters that can be used to form a word.

THINK WISELY.

Solution: 2-10-14

GMWSLLIBLNHRTSP
RNECKLAGEAOSTS
FIAGMPDIGSTFP
TBVSSNOCOSTENSE
SPRUIUOCMINOADN
OUIASDR①②③④⑤⑥⑦⑧⑨⑩⑪⑫⑬⑭⑮⑯⑰⑱⑲⑳㉑㉒㉓㉔㉕㉖㉗㉘㉙㉚㉛㉜㉝㉞㉟㊱㊲㊳㊴㊵㊶㊷㊸㊹㊺㊻㊼㊽㊾㊿

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CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Prep for
5 Talk
9 Reactions
12 Source
13 Fan
14 Ballon
15 Alert
17 Attempt
18 Paradise
19 Heed
21 Mortals
24 Potent
25 Circular
26 Supp
30 Hood's
31 Lent
32 Judge
33 Deprived
35 Hosiery

DOWN

36 Tolkien's
37 Boom
38 Page
40 Head
42 Acup
43 Huddle
48 Kitten
49 Farewell
50 Eastern
51 Skillet
52 Instru
53 Red
54 Expert
55 Charged
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Solution time: 21 mins.

Yesterday's answer: 2-24

STUMPED?

For answers to today's crossword, call 1-800-228-5555. Six per minute. Touch-tone only. Please call only during business hours.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY

Paula Zahn, Kristin Davis, Edward James Olmos, George Harrison

HAPPY BIRTHDAY: Focus on what is most important and let everything else go. Your quality of life will get better once you take control and realize that you don't have to do everything yourself. Zero in on what you want and you will have no regrets. Your numbers are 9, 11, 27, 32, 45, 47

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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ARIES (March 21-April 19)

Don't let anything stifle your mood or your high-energy approach today. Your well-rounded attitude will cinch any deals you are trying to get off the ground. □□□

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

Listen to what everyone around you is saying. Added perspective will lead you to a solution to a problem that has been plaguing you. □□□

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

Limit yourself to what interests you the most and you will get the highest payback. Someone you meet through an event or by chance will interest you. Change can be good. □□□□

CANCER (June 21-July 22)

This is not the day to trust others or to let anyone else take care of something you should be doing yourself. Don't lend or borrow money or possessions. □□

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

You can make anything happen if you put an effort into what it is you want to accomplish. Romantic encounters will be yours, so don't be afraid to make the move. Travel, socializing and having fun will be prominent. □□□□□

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

You may be feeling a little under the weather today if you have been burning the candle at both ends. Be wary of friends or relatives who want you to get involved financially. □□□

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

If something doesn't match up quite right, you may want to reevaluate your motives and your future. Self-deception may be what led to the position you are in. □□□

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)

You can build greater security into your life if you budget more wisely. Be up-front about the way you feel and what you think. □□□

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

Travel and meetings that are inspiring or innovative will get your mind ticking and get a partnership or new venture in the works. □□□□□

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

This may be a trying day especially if you are working with people who are stubborn. Use a positive approach and, if the person you are dealing with doesn't respond, go it alone. □□

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

Join a group or an organization that you have an interest in and you will probably meet someone very special. Verbalizing your thoughts will get others thinking along the same lines. □□□□

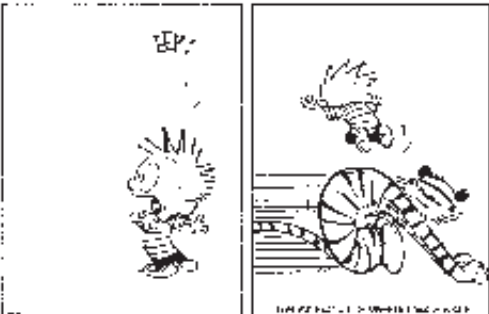
PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

Focus on work or trying to get ahead. If you are unemployed, take the initiative and pick a direction. Do everything you can to get motivated and moving in a positive direction again. □□□

BIRTHDAY BABY: You are inquisitive and forever wanting to know what everyone around you is doing. You are also cautious and don't usually put yourself in harm's way. You are hardworking and will always do your best.

Check out Eugenia's Web sites at astroadvice.com and eugenialast.com.

Calvin and Hobbes

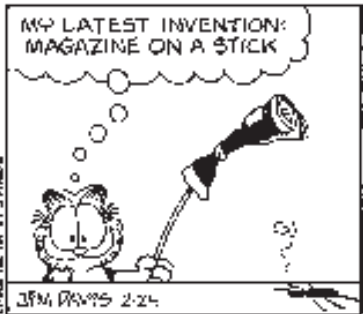


By Bill Waterson



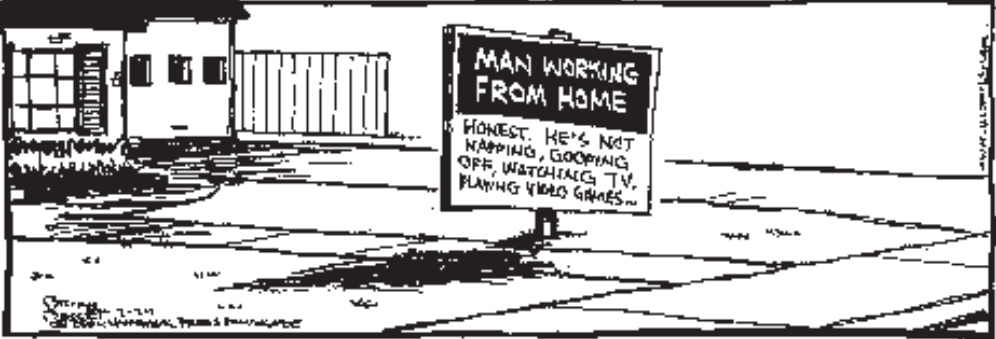
Garfield

By Jim Davis



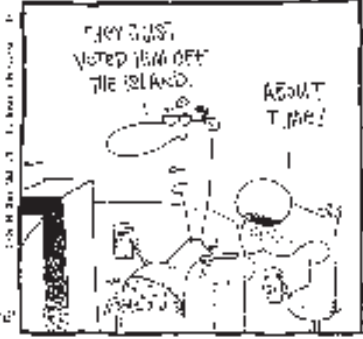
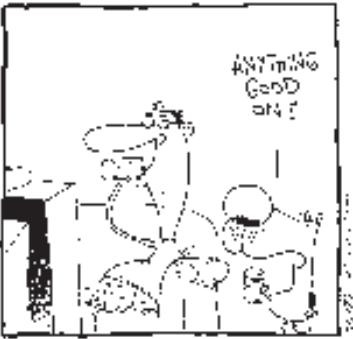
Adam@home

By Bryan Basset



The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy





The official rules for both runs are as follows:

All registered runners must be checked-in prior to the start time; all runners must remain on the ocean side of Beach Road throughout the course; all runners must also remain on the shoulder of the road within coned areas.

Running anywhere else may result in a disqualification.

An official will be stationed at each turn-around marker for check-off. Runners not checked off will be disqualified from the competition.

The 10k turn-around is located across the Saipan Bowling Center in San Jose. The turn-around marker for the Half Marathon is at the San Antonio Beach Park just



SPORTS BRIEFS

122 CONFIRMED
From Page 28



So far, 11 tournaments slated by BANMI

Eleven basketball tournaments and still counting.

27

Saipan Tribune Sports

O'Neal's Pacers stop Pistons' 13-game winning streak

Jermaine O'Neal had 28 points and 15 rebounds to help the Indiana Pacers snap the Detroit Pistons' 13-game winning streak Tuesday with an 81-69 victory.

25



28 THURSDAY, JANUARY 22, 2004

SAIPAN TRIBUNE

122 confirmed for Half Marathon/10K

Race orientation tomorrow

By SHAN SEMAN
REPORTER

A total of 122 competitors, mostly from Japan, have confirmed participating in the upcoming Saipan Half Marathon/10K Fun Run, which will take place this Saturday, January 24.

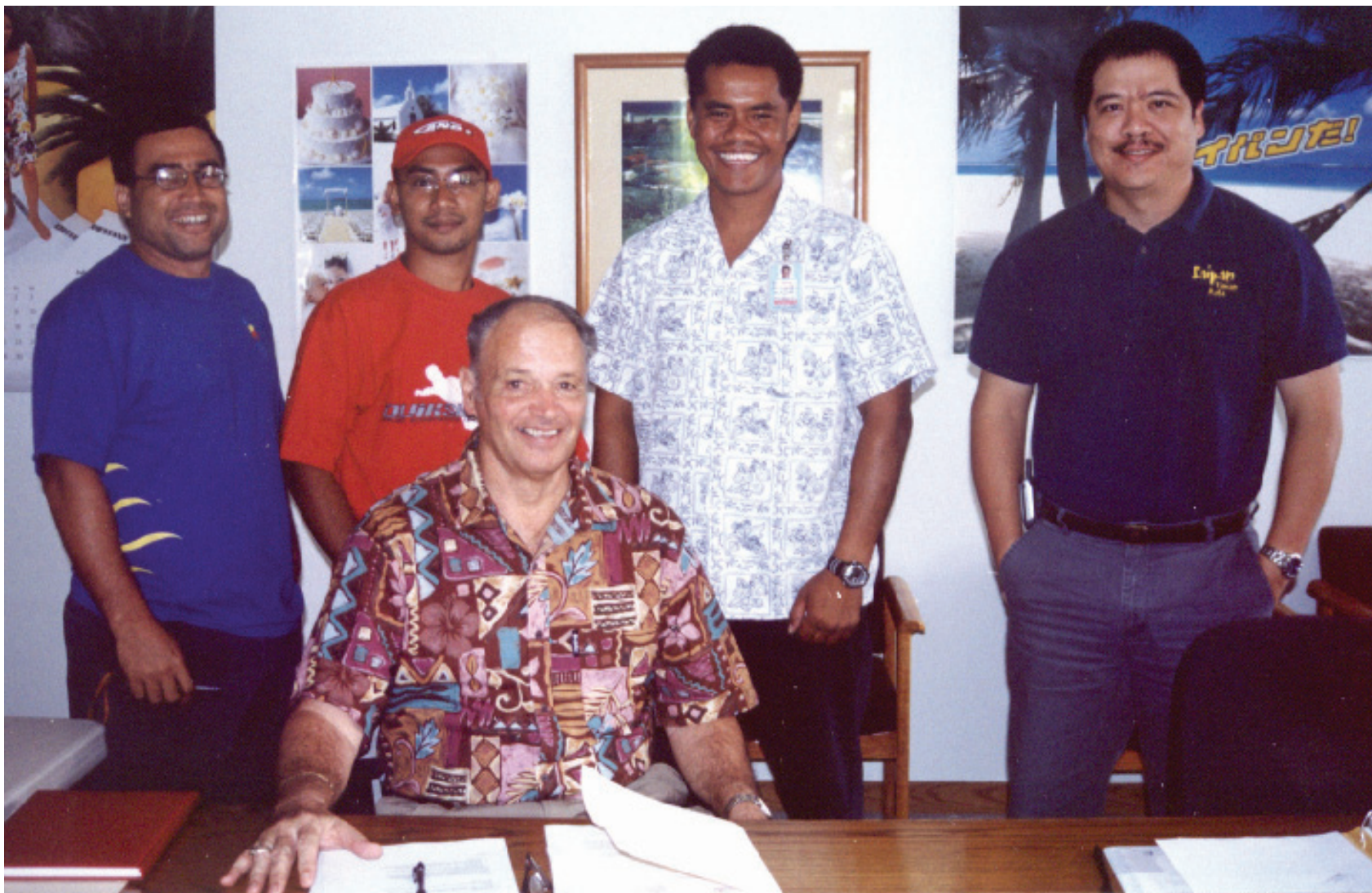
Off the 122 runners, 79 will see action in the 23rd Annual Half Marathon while 43 will slug it out for supremacy in the 18th Annual 10K Fun Run.

Those figures were released yesterday during a meeting between the Marianas Visitors Authority and Northern Mariana Islands Track and Field Federation at the MVA office in San Jose.

According to Ed Johnson of MVA, over 50 percent of the total number of participants are from Japan.

"We were working closely with our offices in Japan and Korea, and as of today [January 21], more than 50 percent are from Japan," he said. "Majority from Japan are above 50 years old and have participated in this event for 10-plus years. It is a well known event, formerly known as the MVA Buffalo Fun Run, so runners from Japan are pretty familiar with it."

Prior to the event, all participants are encouraged to attend a race orientation tomorrow, January 23, at the MVA parking lot. A briefing for all non-English speaking runners will be held at 4:30pm while English-speaking competitors will have their orientation



SHAN SEMAN

Organizers of the upcoming Saipan Half Marathon/10K Championships strike a pose for a photo during a meeting yesterday at the Marianas Visitors Authority conference room. Standings from left to right are Elias Rangamar and Robin Eugenio of the Northern Mariana Islands Track and Field Federation, and Ed Johnson and Martin Duenas of the MVA. Sitting is NMITFF president Kurt Barnes.

at 5pm. MVA will also provide translators and account staff to handle payments of fees.

The fee required to compete in either

runs is \$30. However, the last day, to register is Saturday between 4:30 and 5:15am during the pre-race check-in. Both races will then get underway at 5:

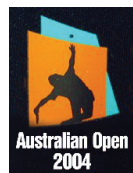
30am at the intersection of the American Memorial Park and Beach Road just north of the Department of Public Safety Garapan Substation. Runners

will work their way south along Beach Road and back track to the finish line, also located at the intersection.

See 122 CONFIRMED on Page 27

Roddick, Agassi win at Australian Open

By JOHN PYE
AP SPORTS WRITER



MELBOURNE, Australia (AP)—Top-ranked Andy Roddick and defending champion Andre Agassi breezed into the third round of the Australian Open by winning in straight sets Wednesday over Czech rivals.

Agassi had a 6-0, 6-2, 6-4 win over 18-year-old Tomas Berdych, closing with an ace in 1 hour 22 minutes. Roddick fired 20 aces and didn't lose a point on his first serve in the third set of a 6-2, 6-2, 6-3 win over Bohdan Ulihrach.

Roddick set up triple match point with a curling forehand winner down the line and finished it off in 1:13 with a booming first-serve winner.

Justine Henin-Hardenne, ranked No. 1 and winner at Wimbledon and the U.S. Open in 2003, had a 6-1, 6-4 win over childhood friend Camille Pin of France in her second-round match.

See Roddick on Page 27



AP

Andre Agassi of the U.S. reacts after his second round win over Tomas Berdych of the Czech Republic at the Australian Open in Melbourne, Australia, Wednesday, Jan. 21, 2004. Agassi won in straight sets 6-0, 6-2, 6-4.

Youth Volleyball canceled as teams pull out

By SHAN SEMAN
REPORTER

Just last week, it seemed like everything was set for another thrilling season of youth volleyball action.

That, however, won't be the case as Division of Sports and Recreation staff Jovie Omar stated yesterday that officials have decided to cancel the Island-wide Youth Volleyball League 2004 season due to an insufficient number of teams participating.

Omar said that the Marianas High School Dolphins and the Kagman High School Ayuyus pulled out of the competition after learning that it will coincide with another volleyball league that they've committed to. The other league is being coordinated by the Marianas Inter-scholastic Sports Association—the sports body for high schools. She also hinted but did not confirm that the Saipan Southern High School Manta Rays might have also pulled out to compete in the MISA league.

With the three teams withdrawing, the boys division was left with just one team—Shag. Only two teams remained in the girls' division—Chickas and the Grace Christian Academy Eagles—forcing officials to call the league off.

For the record, the league featured just one official result in 2004. Last Thursday, the defending champions Chickas were scheduled to battle the Eagles in the season-opener, but suited up just four players for the match, resulting in the Eagles winning via forfeit.

The league, normally held in November, was postponed several times towards the end of last year due to the same reason it was canceled. Earlier in the month, officials were positive as more teams signed up for competition. A total of 20 games were scheduled to take place in the girls' division while the boys' corner would've featured 12 matches in the regular season.

